



UPDATE

Beyond the Fires Travel Montana's Marketing Strategy

Now that the majority of the fires have simmered down, we thought it would be a good time to recap our marketing strategy and public relations campaign during the fires. Our marketing effort was a team approach. Each of Travel Montana's programs had a hand in helping to shape and mold our message. Due to unprecedented media coverage, Travel Montana needed to get the word out that the state was accessible and open. Our message revolved around three major themes. Provide timely and accurate information to the traveling public, be realistic about the fires, but at the same time dispel misconceptions that the entire state was on fire and finally, let the public know there was still plenty of things they could see and do despite the fires. The way we got our message out was through the internet, media interviews, video news releases and our call center.

Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn has begun to hit the road to talk with folks throughout the state about our marketing strategy. "We believe it is important to let Montanans know how we marketed the state during the fires and allow them to express their views and opinions about what we did and where we should go from here."

Website - visitmt.com Fire Information Page

It's hard to imagine, but just four years ago we were in the initial stages of developing our website. Today this marketing tool has proven to be a phenomenal success. The fire information page gave us the ability to define and shape our message and deliver it in a timely manner. It became a clearinghouse of information for many of our state agencies, the media and the traveling public. This site was constantly evolving throughout the summer. During the last week of fire activity, August 27 through September 2, 2000, our site averaged 8,148 user sessions per day. Prior to the fires we averaged 3,900 visitor sessions. Since fire activity has decreased we have leveled off to 5,000 user sessions per day.

Go Beyond the Fires— Rediscover Montana

The focus of this website campaign is to inform residents and nonresidents that in

spite of the fires, Montana has a lot of things to see and do this fall. And for the first time we incorporated flash technology, an interactive multimedia animation component, into the page. If you haven't seen the site, it is worth a look.

Banner Advertisements

In an effort to drive visitors to our "Rediscover Montana" site we placed banner ads on 16 regional newspaper websites. Although we do not have hard numbers, the ads had good click-through response. This campaign ran from August 28 through September 29, 2000.

Media Interviews/ Press Releases

The staff was interviewed by countless state, regional and national press. Our message was again not to downplay the fires, but stress that Montana is a big state and that there was still plenty of things for visitors to experience, especially our national parks. We also emphasized our website as well as distributed

press releases to the media hammering away at our message.

Video News Releases

Travel Montana distributed two video news releases to a total of 50 TV stations around the country. The first VNR focused on how our website has been a valuable tool in disseminating fire and travel information to the public. The second VNR highlighted "Autumn in Glacier Park."

Call Center

Travel Montana's call center, 800-VISIT-MT (847-4868) began operating seven days a week on Saturday, August 19, to respond to requests about the fires. Normally at this time of the year the center is open Monday-Friday. Our travel counselors were able to provide the callers with personal assistance and give them useful information and alternative travel itineraries if necessary. The call center resumed normal business hours on October 2.

Go for the Gold

Olympians Lenny Krayzelberg, Megan Quann, and Ian Thorpe aren't the only winners this year; Travel Montana has its own cause for celebration. The National Council of State Tourism Directors recently honored Travel Montana and the Wyoming Business Council's cooperative marketing campaign with a first place Mercury Award. But this winning tradition is nothing new. In the past ten years Travel Montana has received over 90 honors for its successful television, print, radio and website marketing campaigns.



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A Look Towards the Future

The Future of the Past committee held its fourth meeting in Missoula on September 13. The group is working cooperatively to develop a unified plan on how to fund the preservation of Montana's historical and cultural treasures. Ideas for funding include an increase in the lodging tax, a tax on car rentals and a cultural trust within the coal trust.

The 14-member committee is comprised of six legislators and two members each from the Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees, the Montana Heritage Commission, the Tourism Advisory Council and the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission.

A final meeting is scheduled for November 16. Recommendations from this meeting will be presented to the 2001 legislature.

Travel Montana Selects CTAP Communities

Pondera County, Miles City, and the Fort Peck Reservation are the 2000/2001 Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP) participants. These three communities will take part in the eight-month-long

assessment process designed to help rural communities determine how tourism can help diversify and expand their area economies. CTAP is a cooperative project between the Montana Commerce Department's Travel Montana program, MSU Extension and the University of Montana's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR).

What's Your Sign?

The 18 state and federal agencies and commissions involved with the Montana Tourism and Recreation Initiative (MTRI) have produced a Lewis & Clark in Montana Interpretive Sign Strategy publication to help answer questions and provide direction toward creating a unified and coordinated network of Montana signs and structures interpreting the historical expedition.

The Lewis & Clark in Montana Interpretive Sign Strategy is available in a variety of formats. The entire document is posted on the Montana Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission's website: montanalewisand-clark.org in the "What's New" section under "Commission News & Updates". The sign

strategy is also available on a CD or in printed form from Travel Montana's MTRI coordinator, Carol Crockett, at (406) 444-9294 or carol@visitmt.com. There is no charge for using the sign strategy in any of its formats.

Travel Montana is your Guide for Winter Fun

Wax your skis, pull your parka from the closet and get those legs in shape. It's that time of year when we all start thinking snow. And there's no better way to get up-to-date winter information than our new 2000/2001 edition of the Montana Winter Guide and the October 2000-April 2001 Calendar of Events. Add to your Montana winter adventure by checking out our winter websites: wintermt.com, skimt.com and sledtherockies.org. If you are interested in our publications contact Travel Montana at (406) 444-2654.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events

October

- 5-6 L&C Bicentennial Commission Planning Conference, Great Falls
- 10-12 Incentive Travel & Meeting Execs, Chicago
- 13-21 "Grand Reportages," French magazine, FAM tour

November

- 7 Election Day
- 10-15 National Tour Association Convention, Salt Lake City

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to Travel Montana's Intranet site:
travelmontana.state.mt.us

News You Can Use

- The elections are a month away; do you know where your candidates stand on tourism issues?
- *Golf Digest* magazine ranked the Flathead Valley and Anaconda's Old Works golf course as one of the top 50 greatest golf destinations in the world.
- Readers of *Backpacker* magazine named Glacier National Park the best backcountry park in America.
- Helena's Sanders Bed and Breakfast, Butte's Copper King Mansion and Bozeman's Howler's Inn earned the distinction as "Montana's Best" in the newest edition of *Frommer's Guide to Montana and Wyoming*.



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